



Level 4: Whitewater Canoeing Instructor Criteria

Overview

Fundamentally, participants are expected to have the paddling skills, technical knowledge, rescue ability, teaching ability, group management, and interpersonal skills commensurate with this level of certification prior to presenting themselves for evaluation as Instructor Candidates at an Instructor Certification Course (IDW, ICE, or ICW).

Course Prerequisites

- Acknowledgement of personal compliance with the [ACA Essential Eligibility Criteria \(EEC\)](#).
- Be a current ACA member
- Completion of the appropriate level skills course, assessment course, or equivalent skills

Course Duration

Combined Instructor Development Workshop (IDW) and Instructor Certification Exam (ICE) - Minimum 5 days (40 hours).

Course Location / Accessible Venues

Sections of rivers rated class II-III, where maneuvering in current is required to avoid obstacles. *A rapid class includes rapids at the lower and upper ends of the difficulty range, designated “-” and “+” respectively.*

Course Size

Tandem: 6 Instructor Candidates : 1 Instructor Trainer; with an additional instructor, the ratio can be 12 : 2. The maximum number of instructor candidates permitted is 12.

Solo: 5 Instructor Candidates : 1 Instructor Trainer; with an additional instructor, the ratio can be 10 : 2. The maximum number of instructor candidates permitted is 10.

Succeeding Courses

- Level 5: Advanced Whitewater Canoeing Skills, Assessment, or Certification Course
- Canoe Rolling skills or Endorsement Course

The following is a list of the criteria used to evaluate Instructor Candidates. The content and sequence of evaluation is to be adjusted to best fit the participant's needs, class location, time allowance, and be craft appropriate.

General Requirements for all ACA Certification Candidates

- Be at least 18 years old
- Demonstrate general knowledge of ACA Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion (DEI) initiatives
- Successfully complete an Instructor Certification Workshop (IDW and ICE)
- Upon successful completion, register with the Safety Education and Instruction Council
- Have and maintain first aid and age appropriate CPR
- Demonstrate a general knowledge of paddlesports and the ACA
- Demonstrate the ability to appropriately perform and teach all of the following material, unassisted, in the appropriate venue

Certification Maintenance Requirements

- Teach at least two courses that meet ACA standards within the four-year certification period and properly report the courses using the ACA Course Management System (CMS).

- Complete an Instructor Update, at the highest level of certification, during the four-year certification period
- Maintain ACA membership and SEIC registration annually
- Maintain appropriate CPR and first aid certification for the duration of certification

ACA Level 4: Whitewater Canoeing Instructor Requirements

Demonstrate a knowledge of ACA administrative processes:

- How to register and report a course (with and without insurance)
- An understanding of the ACA Waiver and Release of Liability
- Familiarity with the ACA website and the resources and SEIC policies available

Demonstrate a knowledge of and appropriately model teaching and learning theory:

- Understand multiple methods of teaching and how they impact different learners
- Differentiate instruction targeting different learners
- Use effective teaching methods including appropriate skills progressions when teaching complex skill sets
- Present information effectively, both prepared and impromptu
- Focus on **core principles** rather than specific techniques
- Provide appropriate, specific, and meaningful feedback

Demonstrate the following:

- Positive interpersonal skills to include all items outlined in the ACA SEIC Policy Manual
- Appropriate group management skills including leadership and judgment
- Ability to choose an appropriate venue / class site
- Effectively make documented skill assessments

Demonstrate ability to paddle efficiently and comfortably in venue utilizing:

- Safe and effective body usage: bio-mechanics (body, posture, linkage, and rotation)
- Efficient and effective paddle placement for intended maneuver
- Parts of strokes: CPR (catch, power, recovery), static and dynamic

Demonstrate ability to teach and model these paddling strokes:

- Forward and Cross-Forward with rotation
- Forward (w/ stern pry, rudder and J stroke corrections)
- Back (stern far back and compound back, solo & bow reverse J)
- Sweeps (forward, reverse)
- Draws (onside/offside) static/dynamic/sculling (out of water and in water recovery)
- Prys (static/dynamic, righting)
- Braces (low, high)
- Duffek (onside/offside)
- Jam
- Slice
- C-stroke

Demonstrate ability to teach and model these flatwater maneuvers effectively:

- Forward stroke, to propel the kayak straight forward
- Reverse/back stroke, to stop and reverse straight backward
- Forward and reverse sweeps, to turn and/or spin the kayak
- Draw and sculling draw, to move the kayak sideways evenly
- Low brace to avoid capsize
- Rudder (stern) to glide straight and turn to paddle side

Principles of Rescue

- Rescue priorities: people, boat, paddle, gear
- Responsibilities of the group, rescuer, swimmers
- Throw rope applications as rescuer and swimmer
- Basic wading

Demonstrate ability to teach and model these boat-based rescue techniques effectively:

- Calmly exit the boat after a capsize, using proper body position and contact with the craft and paddle
- Paddle recovery
- Strategies for boat recovery
- Self-rescue: swimming with equipment
- Swimmer towing options
- Swimmer re-entry/re-mount techniques
- Strategies and techniques for boat and paddle recovery including bumping, bulldozing, towing, equipment to shore
- Canoe specific rescues (i.e., boat over boat, side by side, scoop)
- Unresponsive paddler rescue (i.e., Hand of God rescue)

Demonstrate the ability to teach the following river hydrology features and articulate the associated risks:

- Currents
- Rocks (upstream and downstream Vs)
- Ledges and low head dams (horizon lines)
- Pins and entrapment
- Strainers/sieves
- Bends

- Undercut rocks or ice
- Dams/flow diversion structures and pipelines

Demonstrate ability to teach and model these maneuvers in course venue effectively:

- Front ferries: to a fixed point
- Eddy turns: with boat leans into small eddies
- Peel-outs
- C-turns
- S-turns
- Back ferries
- Sideslips (shifts) - onside & offside
- Spins (onside & offside)
- Bracing (low/high)
- Complex attainments
- Front Surfing

Demonstrate ability to teach these concepts effectively:

- Paddling environments pertinent to paddlers
 - Water
 - Weather
 - Wind
 - Waves
 - River classifications (Understanding of Class I - VI)
- Principles of Rescue
 - Rescue Priorities: people, boat, paddle, gear
 - Responsibilities of the group, rescuer, swimmers

- Appropriate use of rescue and safety gear
- Emergency procedures
- Communication
 - Paddle, hand, and whistle signals
 - Cell phone and radios when appropriate
- River etiquette and Leave No Trace (LNT) principles and application to paddling environments
- Self care and care of other group members
 - Importance of fueling, hydration, clothing/insulation, and sun protection
 - Cold shock, hypothermia, and hyperthermia: prevention and treatment

Demonstrate ability to teach and model these boat-based rescue techniques effectively:

- Calmly exit the boat after a controlled capsize in deep moving water, using proper body position and contact with the craft and paddle
- Self rescue: swim 20 feet (6 meters) to shore in moving water using defensive and offensive techniques
- Strategies and techniques for boat and paddle recovery including bumping, bulldozing, towing, or swimming equipment to shore
- Swimmer tow options
- Self and assisted swimmer re-entry techniques (i.e., heel hook, rescue sling, paddle float) in flat water
- Assisted rescues: boat over boat in flat water, side by side in moving water
- Unresponsive paddler rescue
- Throw rope: rescuer must be able to throw a rope to a swimmer in moving water at 30 feet (9 meters) and demonstrate proper rope receiving technique as a swimmer
- Emptying water from the boat (on shore, bailers, pumps, sponges, etc.)

Demonstrate knowledge of and the ability to teach the following knowledge and skills effectively:

- Life jackets: types, usage, fitting, regulations
- Canoe: types, parts, materials, nomenclature, and design
- Paddle: types, parts, materials, fit
- Helmets: types, fit, usage
- Securing boat for transport on car or trailer using proper tie downs, straps, or knots
 - Knots: Figure-8, bowline, truckers hitch, and 2 half hitches
- Canoe carries: overhead & suitcase
- Importance of developing good judgment and group responsibility for a trip
 - Group organization, trip planning, and travel strategies
 - Float plan components and filing
 - Maps, guide books, local knowledge
 - Lead boat, sweep boat, safety boats, spacing, group members with repair kits, first aid kits, and first aid and CPR training
 - The importance of developing personal judgment and group responsibility increases on more difficult paddling venues
 - Self Awareness
 - Understanding level of personal anxiety
 - Understanding personal risk assessment style and tolerance
 - Knowing your responsibility to the group
 - Self Evaluation
 - What is required to successfully navigate this river feature?
 - Can I perform the needed moves and requirements?
 - What are the consequences if I fail? Am I able to accept these consequences?
 - What type(s) of rescue would be required if I fail?

- Group Evaluation
 - Is the size of the group manageable for me as a leader?
 - Does the group have the skills to perform the needed moves and requirements?
 - Is the group in satisfactory condition to navigate this feature (anxiety, risk tolerance, physical wellness including nutrition, hydration, fatigue, mental sharpness)?
 - Are members of the group able and willing to support others (without peer pressure)?
- Federal, state, and local laws and regulations that apply to trip venue or route
- Put-in safety briefing
- Scouting
- Three boat minimum for group trip

Demonstrate leadership, group management skills, experience and judgment necessary to be a safe, effective instructor

Notes:

An ACA Level 4: Whitewater Canoeing Instructor is expected to be able to demonstrate and teach everything on the Level 4: Skills Course and Level 4: Skills Assessment for their level/craft.

© American Canoe Association

Date of last revision: 4/14/2023

<https://americancanoe.org>

This curriculum is managed by the ACA Canoeing Committee. To connect with the leadership of this committee, please view the SEIC Committee rosters on [the ACA website](#).